



ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY 6-1:

Policy for Records Retention, Storage and Destruction

Approved: Board of Supervisors

Authority: Information Systems

Resolution: 92-0563

Revised Date: 7/27/04

I. Purpose

To establish a policy for the retention, storage, and disposition of records for each department, board, commission, program, district, and agency of Sonoma County government in accordance with administrative, legal, audit, and historical requirements.

II. Definition

"Records" shall be defined as all papers, books, maps, drawings, letters, photographs, films, microforms, magnetic or other tapes, punched cards, films, electronic or optical data imaging records or other documentary material regardless of physical form or characteristics which have been or shall be created, received, filed, or recorded by any County office or department or its lawful successor, or officials thereof in pursuance of law or ordinance or in the conduct, transaction, or performance of any business, duty, or function of public business, whether or not confidential or restricted in use. Materials acquired solely for reference, exhibit, or display and stocks of publications shall not constitute records for purposes of this policy.

III. Policy

County records shall be created, maintained, and disposed of in accordance with the provisions of this policy and in no other manner. In accordance with California Government Code, Sections 6200 and 6201, any County officer or employee who is guilty of stealing, willfully destroying, mutilating, defacing, altering or falsifying, removing or secreting the whole or any part of a public record, or permits any other person to do so, is subject to punishment by imprisonment or fines.

IV. Records Retention Schedules

The County Records Manager will work with each department to develop a records retention schedule in accordance with administrative, departmental, legal, audit, and historical requirements. The purpose of these retention schedules is to identify how long records should be maintained within a department, when they should be sent to inactive records storage at the County Records Center, and when they should be destroyed or sent to the County Archives at the Sonoma County Public Library for permanent retention. Retention schedules, or changes thereto, must be reviewed and signed off by the County Records Manager, department head, County Counsel, Auditor-Controller, County Historical Records Commission, and approved by a 4/5ths vote of the Board of Supervisors.

V. County Records Center

- A. Closed or inactive records of departments should be stored offsite at the County Records Center on a regular basis in order to: conserve office space, avoid unnecessary leasing or building of office storage space, avoid the unnecessary purchase of filing equipment and supplies, and to speed access to active files.
- B. Each department is the owner of their respective records, regardless of location. The Records Management Division serves as custodian of records stored at the County Records Center.

- C. Records maintained in the County Records Center may be retrieved only by the originating department or agency. The Records Management Division will publish and maintain a Records Management Manual that specifies procedures for records retrieval.

VI. Records Destruction

- A. All County records should be destroyed in the normal course of business in accordance with approved records retention schedules. Departments which do not have approved records retention schedules should contact the County Records prior to destroying records.
- B. All County departments and special districts are subject to Federal, State, and local government requirements which pertain to the destruction of records.
- C. In addition to specific California codes permitting destruction of records, all County departments are also subject to the general destruction provisions of the California Government Code, Sections 26201, 26202, 26205, and 26205.1. Under these codes, the Board of Supervisors may authorize the destruction of records.
- D. In addition to specific California codes permitting destruction of records, all special districts are also subject to the general destruction provisions of the California Government Code, Sections 60200, 60201, and 60203. Under these codes, the legislative board of a district may authorize the destruction of such records.
- E. Certain specified records of the courts included on retention schedules can only be destroyed upon order of the court.
- F. Records required for ongoing or imminent litigation, audits, claims or other disputes should not be destroyed until these matters are resolved.

VII. Responsibilities

The Records Manager will be responsible for the proper destruction of records stored within the County Records Center. All County departments will be responsible for the proper disposition of records stored within their offices. Proper disposition of records includes the recycling of non-confidential records, the shredding of confidential records, or the transfer of obsolete historical records to the County Archives for preservation.